

MICHIGAN STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY

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Thank you Chairman Hune, my name is Steven Newman. I am a Neurologist from Oakland County, and am the president of the Michigan State Medical Society. I would begin by thanking the Chair and members of the Committee this afternoon for the opportunity to express the support of the 16,000 members of the Michigan State Medical Society for Senate bills 429-430.

Senator Schuitmaker and Senator Marleau have introduced and worked on this legislation to streamline the process for physician practices when obtaining prior authorization. At its best, prior authorization is an additional requirement placed upon physicians to expand the number of pharmaceutical options available to patients by requiring that other lower cost alternatives be tried first. At its best, prior authorization protocols reflect the prescribing needs of the physician for their patient and then requires a relatively straightforward process for those patients who, for whatever reason, need a medication that is not readily covered by the insurer. Conversely, prior authorization at its worst is a bureaucratic nightmare. At its worst, prior authorization is an unnecessary obstacle placed upon physicians with the sole expectation that physicians will not commit the time and hassle required to navigate the bureaucratic maze and simply relent by providing the patient with the medication that requires no prior authorization.

In my role as President of MSMS, I have been fortunate to meet and interact with physicians from across the state. Many of my colleagues express concern that more and more of their time is being diverted away from the exam room and more and more time is spent on the phone with an insurance company instead of their patient. Currently, there is no standardization of the prior authorization process. Physician offices then spend inordinate amounts of time filling out multiple forms that often require almost identical information. It is not surprising that our position on this issue was driven by policy made at our annual meeting by our members, and were pleased at the willingness of Senators Schuitmaker and Marleau to support this issue as well as the indulgence of the Chair to place this issue before the Committee today.

To the credit of Senator Schuitmaker, and the various interest groups she has consulted with on this issue, she has come up with a legislative solution that addresses many of the concerns related to prior authorization while providing insurers with a reasonable degree of flexibility to continue to use prior authorization. Senate Bills 429 and 430 will provide a degree of relief to physician practices by requiring standardization of prior authorization forms while also describing the responsibilities and expectations of both physicians and insurers related to submission of information and timeframes for response. In closing, I would ask that the Committee support the idea of having doctors spend more time in the exam room than on the phone by supporting Senate Bills 429-430.

